A Brief biography of Imaam al-Bukhaaree

He is Muhammad ibn Ismaa'eel ibn Ibraaheem ibn al-Mugheerah al-Bukhaaree, Aboo 'Abdullaah, he was born in Shawwaal, 194H. His Shaykh's include:

In Balkh:
Makkee ibn Ibraaheem (126-214H).

In Marw:
'Adnaan ibn 'Uthmaan al-'Atakee (145-221H), 'Alee ibn al-Hasan ibn Shaqeeq (137-215H), Sadaqah ibn al-Fadl (c. 150-223H).

In Neesaaboor:
Yahyaa ibn Yahyaa ibn Bakr al-Muqri (142-226H).

In Rayy:
Ibraaheem ibn Moosaa ibn Yazeed ar-Raazee (d.>230H).

In Baghdaad (at the end of 210H):
Muhammad ibn 'Eesaa ibn at-Tabbaa (d. 224H), Suraij ibn an-Nu'maan (d. 217H), Muhammad ibn Saabiq (d. 214H), 'Affaan ibn Muslim al-Baahilee (d. 220H).

In Basrah:
Aboo 'Aasim an-Nabeel (122-212H), Muhammad ibn 'Abdullaah ibn al-Muthannaa al-Ansaaree (118-215H), 'Abdur-Rahmaan ibn Hammaad ash-Shu'aythee (d. 212H), Muhammad ibn 'Ar'arah (d. 212H), Hajjaaj ibn Minhaal (d. 217H), Badl ibn al-Muhabbir al-Yarboo'ee (d. 215H), 'Abdullaah ibn Rajaa al-Ghudaanee (d. 220H).

In Koofah:
'Ubaydullaah ibn Moosaa (c. 120-213H), Aboo Nu'aym al-Fadl ibn Dukayn (130-219H), Khaalid ibn Makhlad (d. 213H), Talq ibn Ghannaam an-Nakha'ee (d. 211H), Khaalid ibn Yazeed al-Muqri (d. 215H).

In Makkah:
'Abdullaah ibn Yazeed al-Muqri (d. 120-213H), Khallaad ibn Yahyaa as-Sulamee (d. 213H), Hassaan ibn Hassaan al-Basree (d. 213H), Abul-Waleed Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Azraqee (d. 217H), 'Abdullaah ibn az-Zubayr al-Mumaydee (d. 229H).

In al-Madeenah:
'Abdul-'Azeez al-Uwaysee (-), Ayyoob ibn Sulaymaan ibn Bilaal (d. 224H), Ismaa'eel ibn Abee Uways (139-226H).

In Egypt:
Sa'eed ibn Abee Maryam (144-224H), Ahmad ibn Ishkaab (d. 218H), 'Abdullaah ibn Yoosuf at-Tinneesee (d. 215H), Asbagh ibn al-Faraj (d. 225H).

In Shaam:
Abul-Yamaan al-Hakam ibn Naafi' (138-221H), Aadam ibn Abee Iyaas al-'Asqalaanee (d. 220H), 'Alee ibn 'Ayyaash al-Alhaanee (d. 219H), Bishr ibn Shu'ayb al-Himsee (d. 213H), Abul-Mugheerah 'Abdul-Quddoos ibn al-Hajjaaj (d. 212H), Ahmad ibn Khaalid al-Wahbee (d. 214H), Muhammad ibn Yoosuf al-Firyaabee (120-212H) and Aboo Mushir 'Abdul-A'laa ibn Mushir (140-218H).

His scribe, Muhammad ibn Abee Haatim, said, "I heard him say a month before his death, 'I have written narrations from a thousand and eighty men, none of them was other than a companion of *hadeeth*. They used to say, '*Eemaan* is speech and action, it increases and decreases.'"

Those who narrated from him were very many in number, from amongst them were:

Aboo 'Eesaa at-Tirmidhee (d. 279H), Aboo Haatim (d. 277H), Aboo Bakr ibn Abid-Dunyaa (d. 281H), Aboo Bakr ibn Abee 'Aasim (d. 257H), Saalih ibn Muhammad Jazarah (d. 293H), Muhammad ibn 'Abdullaah al-Hadramee Mutayyan (d. 297H), Muhammad ibn Ishaaq ibn Khuzaimah (d. 311H), Yahyaa ibn Muhammad ibn Saa'id (d. 318H), Muhammad ibn Nasr al-Marwazee (d. 294H), Muhammad ibn Yoosuf al-Firabree (narrator of the *Saheeh* d. 301H), Aboo Bakr ibn Abee Daawood (d. 316H), Ibraaheem ibn Ishaaq al-Harbee (d. 285H), Muslim Ibn al-Hajjaaj (d. 261H), and the last of them was al-Husayn ibn Ismaa'eel al-Mahaamilee (d. 330H).

Imaam Bukhaaree began seeking *hadeeth* at the age of ten in the year 205H. He himself said, "I compiled my book, 'The *Saheeh*,' over sixteen years, and extracted it from six hundred thousand *hadeeth*—and made it an evidence between myself and Allaah, the Most High."

Muhammad ibn Abee Haatim said, "I heard al-Bukhaaree say, 'I entered Baghdaad for the eighth and last time, and each time I would sit with Ahmad ibn Hanbal. So he said to me the final time he bade

farewell to me, 'O Aboo 'Abdullaah, will you leave the knowledge and the people and go off to Khuraasaan?' He said, 'I now recall his saying.'"

Al-Bukhaaree said, "When I wrote *ahaadeeth* I would not do so in the manner of others. When I was to write a narration from a man I would first ask him his name, his *Kunyah*, his descent/origin, and how he had conveyed the *hadeeth*, (and) if he was a person of sound comprehension. If not then I would ask him to bring out his original manuscript copy."

Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Qattaan said, "I heard Muhammad ibn Ismaa'eel say, 'I wrote narrations from over a thousand Shaykhs, from each of them ten thousand narrations at the very least—and I do not have any *hadeeth* except that I can remember its chain of narration.'"

Ibn 'Adiyy said, "I heard a number of Shaykhs relating that when Muhammad ibn Ismaa'eel came to Baghdaad and the companions of *hadeeth* heard of him, they gathered together and (as a test) they took a hundred *hadeeth* and mixed up their chains of narrations and texts, giving the text of one the chain of narration of another, and the chain of narration of one a different text.

Then they divided them between ten people for them to ask al-Bukhaaree about them in the gathering. So the people gathered, and one of them began by asking al-Bukhaaree about one of his ten *hadeeth*, so he replied, 'I do not know it,' and he asked him about another and he said, 'I do not know it,' this continued until he completed the ten. So the people of knowledge began looking at

one another and saying, 'The man understands well.' But the people who did not know thought that al-Bukhaaree was incapable. Then the second began and did the same as the first and al-Bukhaaree kept saying, 'I do not know it.' Then the third and so on until all ten had asked him, and he did not say anything more than, 'I do not know it.'

Then when he knew that they had finished he turned to the first of them and said, 'As for your first *hadeeth* then it should be like this, and the second like this, and the third like this ...' right upto the tenth, restoring each text to its true chain of narration. He did the same with all of the others, so the people attested to his memorisation."

Abul-Azhar said, "There were four hundred students of *hadeeth* in Samarqand and they came together for a week and hoped to find Muhammad ibn Ismaa'eel make a mistake. So they entered the chains of narration of Shaam upon those of 'Iraaq, and the chains of Yemen upon those of Makkah and al-Madeenah, but they could not find a single mistake from him in any chain of narration or any text."

Aboo Ja'far al-'Uqaylee said, "When al-Bukhaaree compiled the book, The *Saheeh*, he showed it to 'Alee ibn al-Madeenee, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Yahyaa ibn Ma'een and others. They declared it to be good, and they testified that it was all authentic, except for four *ahaadeeth*." Al-'Uqaylee said, "And the correct saying about those (four) is the saying of al-Bukhaaree—they are authentic."

The Scholars Praise of al-Bukhaaree

Nu'aym ibn Hammaad said, "Muhammad ibn Ismaa'eel is the *Faqeeh* of this *Ummah*."

Ishaaq ibn Raahawaih said, "Write narrations from this young man (meaning al-Bukhaaree), because if he had lived in the time of al-Hasan the people would have had need of him due to his knowledge of *hadeeth* and its understanding."

Aboo Bakr ibn Abee Shaybah and Muhammad ibn 'Abdullaah ibn Numayr both said, "We have not seen anyone like Muhammad ibn Ismaa'eel."

Ahmad ibn Hanbal said, "Khuraasaan has not brought out the like of Muhammad ibn Ismaa'eel."

Aboo 'Ammaar al-Husayn ibn Huraith praised al-Bukhaaree and said, "I am not aware that I have seen anyone the like of him, it is as if he had been created solely for the *hadeeth*."

Muhammad ibn Bashshaar said, "The great memorisers of the world are four: Aboo Zur'ah in Rayy, ad-Daarimee in Samarqand, Muhammad ibn Ismaa'eel in Bukhaaraa and Muslim in Neesaaboor."

Ibn Khuzaymah said, "I have not seen under the sky anyone having more knowledge of and better memorisation of the *hadeeth* of Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) than Muhammad ibn Ismaa'eel."

His Excellence and Piety

Muhammad ibn Abee Haatim said, "I heard al-Bukhaaree say, 'I have never backbitten anybody since I knew that backbiting harms its people.'"

Muhammad ibn Abee Haatim said, "I saw that one day he lay upon his back, we were in Firabr and he was compiling the Book of *Tafseer*. He had tired himself out that day and exerted himself in sorting out the *ahaadeeth*, so I said to him, 'I have seen that you say, 'I have not taken any stand since I reached the age of discernment, except upon knowledge,' so what is the reason for your reclining?' He said, 'We have tired ourselves out today and this is a battle-front, and I feared that the enemy would make some assault. So I wished to rest and prepare myself so that if the enemy attacks unexpectedly we will be able to act.'"

Al-Husayn ibn Muhammad as-Samarqandee said, "Muhammad ibn Ismaa'eel had three particular characteristics along with the rest of his praiseworthy qualities: he would not talk except a little, he had not used to desire that which the people possessed and he had not used to occupy himself with the affairs of the people. He was fully occupied with knowledge."

Sulaym ibn Mujaahid said, "For sixty years I have not seen anyone with better knowledge, more pious and more withholding from this world than Muhammad ibn Ismaa'eel."

Muhammad ibn Abee Haatim said, "He used to often ride out to practice archery and I do not recall, despite the length of time that I accompanied him, that his arrow ever missed the target except

twice. Rather he always hit the mark and would not be preceded in that. So one day we went out for archery in Firabr and we went out on the road that leads towards the river. We began shooting arrows and an arrow from Aboo 'Abdullaah struck a support of the bridge over the river and split it. So when he saw what had happened he dismounted and took out the arrow from the support and stopped shooting arrows. Then he said to us, 'Go back,' so we returned.

He said to me regretfully, 'O Aboo Ja'far, could you fulfil a need for me?' I said, 'Yes.' He said, 'Go to the owner of the bridge and say that we have damaged the support, so we wish that you will give us permission to replace it, or that you should take its cost from us and excuse us for what we have done.' The owner of the bridge was Humayd ibn al-Akhdar and his reply to me was, 'Give my greeting of *salaam* to Aboo 'Abdullaah and say to him and tell him that he is absolved of any blame and all my wealth is at his disposal to do with as he wishes.' So when I informed him his face brightened and he became very happy, and on that day he gave charity of three hundred *dirhams* and narrated five hundred *hadeeth*."

Muhammad ibn Abee Haatim said, "I heard him say to Aboo Ma'shar ad-Dareer, 'Please forgive me, O Aboo Ma'shar.' So he said, 'For what?' He said, 'One day you narrated a *hadeeth* and I looked at you and could see that you were very happy with the *hadeeth*, and you were moving your head and your hands, and I smiled at that.' He said, 'You are forgiven, may Allaah have mercy upon you, O Aboo 'Abdullaah.'"

Muhammad ibn Mansoor said, "We were in the gathering of Aboo 'Abdullaah al-Bukhaaree and a man took a speck of something from his beard and threw it upon the ground. So I saw Muhammad ibn Ismaa'eel looking at it and at the people. Then when the people were not noticing he stretched out his hand and picked it up and entered it into his sleeve. Then when he left the mosque I saw him take it out and throw it on the ground - so it was as if he tried to keep the mosque clean from that which he kept his beard clean from."

Ibn 'Adiyy said, "I heard 'Abdul-Quddoos ibn 'Abdul-Jabbaar as-Samarqandee say, 'Muhammad ibn Ismaa'eel came to Khartank, a village about six miles from Samarqand, and he had relatives there, and stayed with them. So one night I heard him supplicate after finishing prayer during the night, 'O Allaah, the earth has become restricted for me despite its extensiveness, so take me to Yourself.' And the month was not complete before he died, and his grave is in Khartank.'"

Muhammad ibn Abee Haatim said, "I heard Aboo Mansoor Ghaalib ibn Jibreel, and it was with him that Aboo 'Abdullaah was staying, say, 'He stayed with us for some days and fell ill and the illness increased in severity and messengers were sent asking that he should be brought to Samarqand. So when he agreed he prepared to travel and wore his leather socks and his turban, but he had only taken about twenty steps or so - and I and another man were holding him by the arms taking him to the horse for him to ride - when he said, 'Let me go, as I have become weak.' So he supplicated with some supplications and lay down and died رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى.'"

Ibn 'Adiyy said, "I heard al-Hasan ibn al-Husayn al-Bazzaaz al-Bukhaaree say, 'Al-Bukhaaree died on the night prior to Saturday, the night of *'Eidul-Fitr* at the time of *'Ishaa*, and he was buried after the *Zuhr* Prayer on the day of *'Eidul-Fitr*, in the year 256H. He lived for thirteen days less than sixty two years.'"[1]

[1] Taken from *Siyar A'laamin-Nubalaa* of adh-Dhahabee (12/391-471), *Taareekh-Baghdaad*, (2/4-33) and *Hadyus-Saaree Muqaddimah Fathil-Baaree*, of Ibn Hajr al-'Asqalaanee.